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PP RUEHFL RUEHKW RUEHLA RUEHROV RUEHSR
DE RUEHSQ #0095/01 0371549

ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 061549Z FEB 08
FM AMEMBASSY SKOPJE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6998
INFO RUEHZL/EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE 0188
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000095

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STATE FOR EUR A/S FRIED FROM AMBASSADOR MILOVANOVIC

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/07/2018

TAGS: PREL PGOV NATO MK GR

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: SOME FLEXIBILITY ON THE NAME AND NATO

REF: A. STATE 08781

¶B. SKOPJE 87

Classified By: AMBASSADOR MILOVANOVIC, REASONS 1.4 (B) & (D).

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) During separate meetings with President Crvenkovski and PM Gruevski today, I pressed for greater flexibility in approaching the Nimetz talks on the name dispute with Greece and urged that Macedonia propose some options to Nimetz before the next round of bilateral talks in Athens on February 19. Both indicated a solution might be achievable through the Nimetz process, although Crvenkovski raised a number of pertinent questions regarding the modalities of such a solution and Gruevski said any solution would have to be approved in a referendum. Neither leader pressed back with the traditional "dual name" position, and both were clearly interested in receiving and analyzing the Nimetz proposal before taking further decisions. We're far from being out of the woods yet, but both leaders are showing signs that they may be willing to demonstrate greater flexibility in reaching a compromise, as long as Athens reciprocates fully and a NATO invitation is the clear outcome of their efforts. End summary.

NEGOTIATE, NOW, IN GOOD FAITH

¶2. (C) I met separately with President Crvenkovski and PM Gruevski February 6 to deliver ref A points on NATO aspirant progress, and to press further for resolution of the name issue before the NATO Bucharest summit (septels follow). I told both leaders that a NATO invitation was theirs to lose (assuming continued reform progress), and that the obstacle -- fair or not -- was the name dispute with Greece. I urged them to find a name for use in international institutions, and with Greece and possibly any other country that had not already recognized Macedonia by its constitutional name. I also urged them to devise some options or formulas for a name that they could pass to UN Negotiator Nimetz before the next bilateral meeting in Athens on February 19. I pointed out that neither their traditional "dual name" position, nor Greece's stance, was leading anywhere and time was short.

A BASIS FOR COMPROMISE

¶3. (C) Crvenkovski acknowledged that even if Greece allowed Macedonia to enter NATO as FYROM (per the 1995 Interim Agreement), the unresolved issue would continue to loom over Macedonia's future Euro-Atlantic prospects and the country would never be able to secure a "complete victory" in which its constitutional name would be recognized for both bilateral and international use. He volunteered that it would be difficult to turn to the UNSC for resolution, since just one member on the Council could block any motion to recognize the constitutional name. Consequently, if Macedonia were to receive "a good proposal" through the Nimetz process a solution might be achievable.

¶4. (C) Assuming a "good proposal" could be found, Crvenkovski said, it would be important to work out details regarding three key issues: a.) the formulation of the proposal (e.g., if Macedonia accepted, but Greece did not, would the country still receive a NATO invitation?); b.) the packaging (e.g., if a compound name were accepted, how broadly would it apply in the UN -- to the description of the Macedonian language/nationality?); and c.) the technical details regarding steps after a proposal was accepted -- what would be required/permitted in terms of ratification by both sides?

I said it was too early to discuss answers to those questions, but agreed to convey them in detail (septel) to Washington for review.

ANALYZE THE NIMETZ PROPOSAL, LET THE CITIZENS DECIDE

¶5. (C) Gruevski was convinced the Greeks intended to veto, but thought that prolonging a resolution of the name issue until after an invitation, but before ratification, "might be

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the only way out." He said he would wait for the Nimetz proposal and analyze it before responding. If the name for international use was acceptable to both sides, he would hope to resolve the issue to pave the way to NATO and -- eventually -- EU membership. Any change in the name, though, even if only for international use, would require the approval of the citizens of Macedonia through a referendum. He said he would have to remain neutral on such a referendum, but added that he was "not pessimistic" about the likely outcome. I pushed back, pointing out that he could reframe the context of public discussions on the choice at hand, moving away from the question of "the name or NATO?" to "FYROM or a differentiated name and/or NATO membership?" Gruevski said he remained committed to working on the issue.

COMMENT

¶6. (C) Details of both conversations follow septels. I found it positive that neither leader drew a "dual name" line in the sand, or rejected outright the suggestion that the Nimetz process could produce a viable solution that preserves Macedonia's dignity while allowing Greece to permit an invitation to go forward. While I detect no sea-change that suggests the GOM has abandoned the "dual name" approach, or that would lead to a quick compromise, I sense that both Crvenkovski and Gruevski finally are earnestly grappling with the potential consequences of a Greek veto, and possible constructive actions they could take, as they head into the next round of bilateral talks with Nimetz in Athens. We will continue to press for a constructive Macedonian proposal to Nimetz, and for continued movement toward a more flexible stance. We hope that Athens can in the meantime be persuaded to prepare for a compromise that would give it much, albeit not all, of what it says it wants from Skopje.

MILOVANOVIC